



DR. ROMAN VISHNIAC

Honorary Life Member, New York Entomological Society

Roman Vishniac was born in Pavlosk near St. Petersburg, Russia, on August 19, 1897. He received his M.D. and Ph.D. (biology) degrees in Moscow in 1920. Shortly afterwards, he fled to Berlin, where he conducted research in endocrinology, working at the same time as a photojournalist. From 1933 to 1939 he produced a photographic record of Jewish communities in Central and Western Europe and part of this unique work was published in 1947 under the title "Polish Jews." His activities attracted the attention of the Gestapo and during the Nazi regime he was imprisoned 11 times, kept twice in concentration camps, and forced to do hard labor. He was sentenced to death twice but fortunately managed to escape and emigrated to the United States in 1940. In New York he became a research associate in anatomy at Albert Einstein College of Medicine and, in 1961, professor in the Department of Biology Education at Yeshiva University. At the same time he also served as project director and film maker for the Living Biology film series of the National Science Foundation, applying his pioneering time-lapse cinematography and light-interruption techniques as

well as color photomicroscopy of living organisms to produce a classic and fascinating film series. His chief biological researches, in addition to entomology, have been in protozoology, marine microbiology, physiology of ciliates and circulation systems in unicellular plants. He originated the hypothesis of the polyphyletic origin of life, according to which the first living organisms were multicellular structures that emerged many times in many places by different biochemical pathways. In 1971 a volume of his splendid color micrographs of proteins, vitamins, and hormones, entitled "Building Blocks of Life" was published.

Dr. Vishniac is fluent in most European and several Asian languages. He is an expert in Far Eastern art and philosophy, and a recognized art historian and science historian as well as a bibliographer. He has one of the largest collections of science books, including many old and very rare volumes. He has taught, among others, at City University of New York and Case Western Reserve University and he is Chevron Professor of Creativity, teaching at present at the Pratt Institute in Brooklyn and in Manhattan.

Dr. Vishniac served for two years as President of the New York Entomological Society. Among his many honors and awards was the Eastman Kodak Gold Medal, which he received "in recognition of outstanding contributions which lead to new and unique educational programs, utilizing motion pictures and instrumentation photography." At present, Dr. Vishniac is working on a new book, entitled "The World that Disappeared."

Karl Maramorosch